

## **Notes for comments at the roundtable**

### **“Taking Responsibility in the Information Age”**

**Geneva, Switzerland**

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**Maureen O’Neil**

**President, International Development Research Centre**

There are three points I want to make about ICTs, poverty and economic development and the World Summit.

First, we at IDRC believe that, as much as possible, ICTs need to be delivered to respond to the current and direct needs of poor people and in ways that they can afford and adopt quickly.

For example,

- In Dakar, Senegal, our Acacia program worked with a Senegalese businessman to develop a new service through his new company, Manobi. Women were trained to use cell phones to go into agricultural markets in Dakar and send prices for commodities to farmers over GSM cellular phones. The farmers received the information and earned enough additional income to purchase their own cell phones. Their incomes increased considerably because of the farmers’ more informed positions relative to the buyers. Daniel Annerose, who developed this service, is one of two Africans who has been nominated for a special award for “e-inclusion and content and creativity” at the World Summit on the Information Society.
- In Uganda, IDRC’s Connectivity Africa program, with Satellife and Healthnet Uganda, are helping to develop the first-ever electronic information service in the health sector using affordable PDAs, GSM cellular phones, and appropriate advanced, battery-powered server technologies from a San Francisco company, Wide Ray Technologies.
- In six Asian countries, our PAN Asia program is helping to develop Internet fonts in local languages so that the poor, who seldom speak the principle language of interest, English, will be able to use digital tools and the Internet.
- In the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, IDRC’s Institute for Connectivity in the Americas is working with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro to use line-of-sight antennae to bring broadband from the university to the urban poor living in the favelas of the city.

Second, we believe that pilot projects aren’t enough. Everyone is now saying: It’s time to “scale up”. IDRC recently developed a project that will introduce VSAT (*Very Small*

*Aperture Terminals*), on open standards, at dramatically reduced prices in combination with WiFi (*Wireless Fidelity*) technologies for broad distribution.

Third, and most importantly, we believe that the principal measure of success of the World Summit on the Information Society is whether or not it can lead to many more projects that “scale-up” access of these technologies, skills and opportunities to people in the developing world.